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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE PRANG COURSE OF INSTRUCTION IN FORM-STUDY AND DRAWING.



THE struggle for existence which is every day becoming more and more strenuous, the uneducated find themselves at a disadvantage compared with the educated, and it is a healthy sign of the times to see such people desiring for their children the acquisitions denied to themselves. This demand of the age for a wider range of study on the part of the youth of the country is having a most beneficial effect upon the science of pedagogy, and not a year passes without the engrafting of fresh educational methods upon the old and narrow system of reading, writing and arithmetic, which are only considered the primary stepping stones to a good education. Of all subjects of study for developing the natural powers, that of instruction in drawing has, until within the last few years, received the least attention of any. Pupils both in Europe and America have been taught the ancient and modern languages, music and natural philosophy, but the methods of instruction in drawing heretofore employed have been ludicrously crude and unsatisfactory. Drawing is still in many places neglected as unworthy of serious study and, excepting those schools where the Prang method is taught, it is only in private schools where the "drawing master" flourishes. We are glad to observe, however, that an art educational movement has taken place in the United States, and the Prang Course in Form-Study and Drawing, initiated by Mr. Louis Prang of Boston, has for nearly twenty years been extending over the country, all that time embodying the ripe knowledge and experience of the most eminent teachers who, during this period, have been most successful in teaching drawing in the public schools. We have received from the Prang Educational Company in Boston, specimen copies of the drawing books and manuals which at present represent the Prang Course of Instruction in Form-Study and Drawing. This unique and systematic course includes all the school years from the first primary class through the intermediate to the high schools. It is a system at once simple and natural, adapted to the plastic child's nature, and which appeals in the first instance to the senses of sight and touch. The old school method limited itself almost wholly to intellectual training and inward activity, but the Prang method in drawing requires observation by the hand and eye, feeling and seeing, and the exercise and development of the senses of touch and sight. The Prang method makes necessary the use and study of external objects and models from the very outset. It is stated that to-day about two millions of people are taught by this method, and the principal teachers and educators of the United States consider it the best and most rational of all systems. A branch of culture heretofore neglected has at a stroke been firmly established in the line of natural methodical progress which must prove one of the most powerful levers known in the history of educational methods. Prang's Shorter Course in Form-Study and Drawing is a course in drawing based upon the principles and methods of the Prang complete course of instruction in drawing which has produced excellent results in the leading schools of that city. The manual entitled "The Use of Models" is intended for the teacher's use during the first two primary years, and no regular drawing books are required for the use of the pupils during this period, their work in drawing being preferably done upon sheets of practice paper. In the first year's work the square, cube, cylinder, and various prisms, as models, are studied, and tablets and sticks are used in tablet and stick-laying exercises. These models are used by the pupils as well as by the teachers. When the scholars have made themselves familiar with their models, they are told how to study other objects similar in size and shape. The scholar's work consists chiefly in cultivating his organs of sense, and his perception of form is invariably obtained from models in real life and not from drawings or copies in the old masters' style. The work of the second year is of the same general character as that of the first year. The pupil is exercised in modelling simple objects, in tablet laying, paper cutting and elementary drawing. The underlying idea is that pupils should discover the properties of form with as little assistance on the part of the teacher as possible. The work of the third year includes objects of a spherical and cubical nature. Pupils are taught to find out by their own observation the facts and appearances of these objects, to tell by the aid of paper and drawing what they have discovered. Natural objects are considered for representation, as, the apple, the toadstool, the leaves of plants, etc., and in decorative arrangements there are zig-zag borders, the Greek cross, etc. In the fourth year the study is broadened and objects of a cylindrical character are studied. From solids geometric drawings are made, and leaves and other parts of plants are drawn. During the first four years of the Prang course, great stress is laid upon the developing of the observing powers through the study of things. This study awakens reflection, or thought, concerning the things observed,

and this thought finds expression by means of modelling and drawing. In the fifth year the cone and conical objects make their appearance, and the study of the appearance of objects—that is, the beginning of perspective—is taken up. The work of the pupils is grouped under three distinct yet correlated divisions, viz.: Construction, or the delineation of the facts of objects leading to working drawings. 2. Representation, or the delineation of the appearance of objects when seen as wholes, leading to pictorial representation. 3. Decoration, or the copying and designing of ornament for decorative purposes. It will be observed that this system of study causes the power of observation to be greatly increased through the cultivation of the senses of sight and touch, and rule and compasses being unused, skill in free-hand drawing has been developed. In the work of the latter school years instruction takes on a more practical form; the study of objects as regards that instruction, their appearance, and the development of ornament from plants or other forms is vigorously carried on, the work being intended for application in practical industry. Under the head of Decoration, the Prang course presents the elementary principles which should determine the selection, combination and idealization of both geometric and natural forms for practical use in the decorative arts. Historical forms of ornament are given, and the learner is taught how to use natural objects for the purpose of conventional design, according to the principles of æsthetics. Throughout the whole course of instruction there is an apparent earnest desire to inspire a love of beauty and to honestly educate public taste. The Prang course is, in fact, a step in practical pedagogics surpassing anything which has been done in this direction, either in Europe or America. A simple and natural method of instruction has been given to the study of drawing and the fundamental principles of constructive, pictorial and decorative drawing have been presented in their true relations. The student is left to depend more upon himself, and is therefore obliged to give his earnest attention and thought to the work in hand. Individuality, under such conditions, is free to develop its indescribable charm where otherwise too fixed and formal standards of personal instruction lead to a lifeless uniformity.

NEW UPHOLSTERY MATERIALS.

MESSRS. W. & J. SLOANE are at present exhibiting some choice novelties for the new season's upholstery trade. They have imported a splendid line of silk tapestry fabrics, a great many of which are their own private designs, and all are notable both for novelty of design and color. A beautiful all silk tapestry is spotted at wide intervals with an Egyptian floral pattern set upon a square shield, the motive having been discovered in an antique Egyptian tapestry in the South Kensington Museum. The prevailing tints in which the fabric is produced are old gold, ceramic and absinthe green. A beautiful tapestry, with a pattern suitable for church purposes, in cream and gold, blue and cream, and other brilliant combinations, is a notable feature of the exhibit. A fine specimen of brocatelle, which is made in Germany, reproduces the splendid effects of the Italian Renaissance. The colors are green and silver and pink and absinthe. There are some fine brocatelles that have large floral bouquets repeated at wide intervals that are suitable for the seats and backs of chairs, the prevailing colors being bouton d'or, acier, aurore, chartreuse and apricot. There are Empire tapestries in ceil blue and vieux rose that possess a magnificent lustre. There is an exquisite example of a broché tapestry, made by Van Bergen & Co., who considered it too fine a fabric for the Paris Exposition. The pattern consists of bouquets of flowers, in more than twenty colorings, embroidered upon the fabric. There is, perhaps, no finer example of a broché tapestry in existence. A silk moiré tapestry in cinnamon red, electric blue, prianon and Watteau tints, next charm us with its beautiful watered effects. There are also fine examples of cordonnet in rose and cream, and lampas in ceramic and vieille paille, all equally charming. In silk velours, the prevailing tints are toreador, camellia red, capote, Isabella, Mersey, and Cleopatra, the latter being a new and exquisite rose tint. The motive of the silk velour goods is a heraldic device not unlike the head of a spear having half a dozen curved prongs thereon. We must not forget to mention a beautiful tulip pattern in a silk tapestry, which reposes upon a heavy barba cloth made, of silk and wool, and styled "Rajah," as a convenient cognomen. The prevailing tints of the latter fabric are bronze, ceramic, toreador and capote blue. There is a beautiful example of a Daghestan tapestry, that is to say, the fabric accurately reproduces the pattern and colorings to be found in Daghestan rugs. Opposite this fabric we see another example of the gorgeous broché tapestry, heavily embroidered with silken flowers, the ground in two instances being dracena and vieille paille. A curious fabric, known as "skin tapestry," is an important feature of the exhibit. This consists of two different fabrics superimposed upon each other, the upper one being of extremely thin silk. They are held together by the pattern, which

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

consists of large floral effects, the motive being a Scotch thistle in a wool weave. The floating "skin" comes in tints of vieux rose, blonde and Nile green. There is also shown an example of taffeta, a peculiar weave which is sometimes known as Australian tapestry, by reason of the fact that the first species that were manufactured were sent to Australia. Altogether, Messrs. Sloane's exhibit is one of surpassing splendor.

CALCORION.



NE of the latest substances for the decoration of walls in relief is termed "Calcorion," which is styled by the manufacturers "the new Cordovan leathern wall decoration," by which the richly embossed effects of fine old leather are reproduced. Cordovan leather was the most

beautiful and unique of all antique embossed leathers, and it is upon the beautiful designs that are executed upon the rarest specimens of Cordovan leather, that the designs of Calcorion are based. The Moors in Cordova made that city famous for its decorated leathers as early as the eleventh century. The first designs were executed by cutting the leather with a penknife only, but at a later date this primitive method was superseded by the use of various punching tools, by means of which hatched, sunk or raised ornament was traced. The old process of preparing Cordovan leathers is worthy of note, and is thus described by M. Henri Mayeux in his work, entitled "Decorative Composition." "Guadamacils, or prepared squares of skins (so-called from a small Andalusian village where large quantities of skins were dressed), were first soaked and then beaten between stones to make them supple. Each square was then washed and wrung dry, preparatory to being stretched by means of an iron frame over a highly polished slab, where it was allowed to remain till dry. A thin size was next rubbed into the skin with the hands, and a surface of gold or silver leaf, or some color, was then imparted. When again dry, the leather so prepared was ready to receive the pattern intended to be embossed. This was effected by a wooden plate on which the design was carved. The plate, being first inked with resinous preparation, the skin was stretched tight over it, and pressed so as to take off the impression. This done, the last and perhaps most laborious stage was reached, as the workmen had then to emboss on the leather the pattern which had become printed on it. The final stage of coloring and trimming being thus attained, the leather decoration was complete. The great charm of leather hangings was their beauty of design, rich coloring, boldness of execution, variety of pattern, and their elegance of appearance. The Cordovan leathers were prized as having great advantages over other hangings; they were of greater durability—they resisted the effects of damp, gathered little dust, and were less subject to the ravages of the moth. Calcorion is, in effect, with modern mechanical appliances, a reproduction of this almost extinct art. Such few old leathers as survive the wear and tear of centuries, bear testimony to the beauty of the old leather hangings. It is now upwards of a century since the last commercial house engaged in the leathern decoration trade closed its doors in Paris. After spreading in the course of centuries through France and the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary and England, the trade declined through the seventeenth century and finally died out in the eighteenth."

Calcorion is one of the most perfect imitations of old embossed leather yet produced. The material is a combination of stout paper, ground cork and India rubber, which imparts to it an elasticity equal to that of stamped leather. The designs are embossed by passing the material through stamped, or chased, metal rollers worked by powerful steam machinery. In its natural state it is of a pale buff hue, but the Company produce designs effectively decorated without additional cost. The decoration includes the coloring, glazing and treatment in gold, silver and bronze, performed entirely by hand with a thorough appreciation of the artistic possibilities of this high class decoration. The Calcorion Decorative Co., of London, are the manufacturers of this unique material, which is highly esteemed by decorators, and all who appreciate art, in its application to household adornment. The chief claim of Calcorion to public attention is the fact that it is an essentially modern reproduction of the beautiful designs peculiar to the best period of Cordovan art. The patterns, whether scrolls, flowers or fruit, or simply arabesques, possess a historical as well as a decorative value, and the material is generally made in rolls of twelve yards.

Calcorion can be hung in the usual manner, great care being necessary in cutting the edges. In using the straight edge, the material is cut with a sharp knife, held at a slight inward inclination, so as to undercut the material, and thus insure a good joint. It is fixed to the wall with paste mixed with a little glue. The paste is first applied to the wall, and not to the Calcorion, which should be hung dry. It is frequently desirable to cover the surface of the wall with a stout lining paper before applying

the paste. The wall being prepared, the Calcorion is attached to it under the cornice by means of gilt pins. The piece is then gently pressed to the wall, making the joint good until it touches the bottom. Care must be taken to press the material from the centre outwards, and it should be noted that the adhesion of the surface, and not of the embossed parts, is all that is necessary. It is sometimes preferable that Calcorion should be hung in the same way as the old embossed leathers were fixed to the walls. This method consists in pasting or tacking the edges only, and covering the joints with narrow bands of ornamented leather, attached by means of fancy studs. The Calcorion then hangs loosely against the wall, and has the advantage of being readily removed, without injury to the material, a desideratum of some importance in a restless nation like that of the United States.

GLASS DECORATION.

THE use of decorated glass in modern buildings is becoming every day more and more widespread. Not only is stained glass used in transom and dome lights, but the ordinary clear glass used in windows, doors and partitions, is either embossed by means of an acid process, or etched by a sand blast, creating a new world of decoration. There is the ordinary ground glass on which one can write with a pencil, but this method of decoration has been superseded by the silver embossed process, which renders the glass at once obscure and translucent, and which will not receive pencil marks or finger stains. The decorations consist of scrolls, diamond, square and circular repeats, decorated borders, monograms, numbering and lettering of all kinds for commercial purposes. Glass signs are being used everywhere nowadays, and one of the most successful firms in the United States, manufacturing these, is the Matthews Decorative Glass Company, of 328 and 330 East 26th Street, New York, who furnish everything in the line of decorative glass, from a church window to a cigar advertisement in the highest style of art. Those of our readers who have seen a beautiful glass dial plate in blue and white, etched with various commercial legends, ought to be informed that this is one of the latest designs of the Matthews Decorative Glass Company. Nothing so adds to the artistic beauty of a vestibule or hallway as to see the inside door having a panel of decorated glass. A panel of chipped glass, that seems to be sliced from the irregular face of a crystal rock, is a brilliant accompaniment to the decorative surroundings. Glass is not only crystalline, but it can be had in blue, ruby, violet, orange and purple tints. "Photo-lights," or etched glass for the use of photographers in composing pictures in their lanterns, are universally used by photographers. In decorating partitions, designs similar to those of wall paper are etched upon white, ruby, blue and orange glass. The designs are frequently floral patterns with grounds resembling irregular combed work. There are scroll repeats, intermingling circles and various styles of arabesques. Sometimes the pattern will resemble a brocaded fabric not unlike the designs found on fifteenth century tapestry, and again will consist of an artistic intermingling of the different species of ferns. A beautiful pattern has for its motive a conventional treatment of the lily of the valley, which, with its tender flowers and long, smooth leaves, produces a most decorative effect. A catalogue of the various uses to which decorative glass is nowadays applied, would make a voluminous list. The glass decorations used in railroad car doors, windows, transoms, deck lights, etc., form a distinct category. Transparent glass signs are used not only by the largest advertisers in the country, but by physicians, drug stores, telegraph and railroad companies. Glass signs being transparent, do the double service of being equally readable by night as well as by day. Another feature is that, through being transparent, they do not shut out any light to speak of, when suspended in store windows, and for this reason are not objected to by storekeepers, who object to opaque signs.

Who of us, at one time or other, has not seen the legends, "Duke's Best Cigarettes," "Sapolio," "Saratoga Geyser," "Piper's Heidseck," "Lazelle's Perfumes," "Pond's Extract," "Friedrichshall Bitter Water," "Cocoa and Beef Tonic," "Vaseline," "Vichy," and "Humphrey's Homœopathic Specifics," inscribed on white and blue, red and white, and brown and white glass signs? These are the work of the Matthews Decorative Glass Company, whose standard decorations have been adopted in the new buildings of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, and the Standard Oil Company, the Chatham National Bank, the Edison Electric Light Company, and many other buildings in New York City and elsewhere. This firm distributes illuminated catalogues, illustrating their decorations in glass, to all who apply for same.

WALL paper with loose, flowing patterns or arabesques in light greens, grays, blues and yellows will harmonize with photographs, prints and delicate water colors.